

To [REDACTED] State Senators, and State Representatives:

Since its inception in 1992, LEAP has played a critical role in developing thousands of positive young leaders who are now high school and college graduates successful contributing members of society, currently employed in various sectors in Connecticut and throughout the country. LEAP has been successful serving and opening the doors of opportunity for children and youth from some of the State's toughest neighborhoods and cities. We ask that you continue to fund LEAP at the current level or increase the funding to expand the program.

LEAP is a successful, nationally recognized multi-tiered youth development program that provides much needed social and educational enrichment for children ages (7-12) living in New Haven's highest poverty neighborhoods. LEAP trains outstanding young leaders to mentor and model and support children's development. Children and youth who have been involved in LEAP are confident, value reading and education, engage in positive social behaviors, and are less likely to engage in problem behaviors.

Every day after-school, children have a safe place to come and complete homework. Throughout the school year and the summer, they are read to and they read. Children also engage in interesting activities that help them to stretch their imaginations, and solve problems creatively. They learn to work with others, communicate effectively, and resolve conflict positively. They use technology to create multi-media projects, learn to swim, and participate in various athletics and arts workshops. LEAP expands children's horizons through experiential learning opportunities.

The Leaders-in-Training Program serves as a bridge program for youth who are too young to become counselors and too old to participate in LEAP. The LIT Program provides academic assistance for middle school students (ages 13-15). LITs also participate in training and an apprenticeship program, complete community service projects, and participate in personal and professional development workshops. They are eligible to apply to become LEAP Junior Counselors at age 16.

High schools students are paired with a college student and they have an opportunity to visit local and out of state colleges. They get help with SAT Preparation and writing their college applications. All of our high school student, many of whom live in the same neighborhoods, graduate from high school and the vast majority go on to higher education. LEAP AmeriCorps Members also earn educational awards to help offset the cost of tuition.

College students serve as mentors to high school students and elementary students. Along with their Junior Counselors, they participate in comprehensive training about various topics, including: the stages of child development, positive group management techniques, reciprocal teaching strategies, and engaging children in reading. Our counselors have weekly contact with parents or guardians of the children in their group. In the summer, they move into the neighborhoods where the children live.

Erik Clemons, Executive Director-LEAP

